

**CITY OF HOUSTON  
FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU  
HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**



**LIFE SAFETY BUREAU (LSB) STANDARD 05**

**KEY BOXES**

**SUPERCEDES:                      NEW STANDARD**

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5-28-03

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LIFE SAFETY BUREAU (LSB) STANDARDS ARE ESTABLISHED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROVISIONS OF THE CITY OF HOUSTON FIRE CODE. THEY ARE SUBJECT TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE SECTIONS COVERING - ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS AND METHODS, MODIFICATIONS, AND BOARD OF APPEALS.

# LSB STANDARD 05

## KEY BOXES

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## LSB STANDARD 05

### KEY BOXES

#### SECTION 1 --- GENERAL

##### 1.1 Scope.

This standard provides a method of providing for and maintaining adequate and unobstructed emergency access for Fire Department apparatus and personnel to buildings, structures, hazardous occupancies or other premises within the City of Houston as may be required by the Fire Marshal, Chief of the Houston Fire Department and the Houston *Fire Code*.

##### 1.2 Purpose.

The purpose shall be to provide clarification of requirements and guidance to person(s) charged with providing and maintaining required fire department access to premises in compliance with the *Fire Code*. The provisions of this standard are general in nature and are not intended to override the specific requirements of City of Houston *Code of Ordinances* or the *Fire Code*.

This standard is subject to periodic review and updates, to accommodate changes in local need or requirements, changes in nationally recognized standards, in related technology or where required by state or federal regulations.

#### SECTION 2 --- DEFINITIONS

##### 2.1 Falcon Mortise Cylinder.

An approved “9-1-1” mortise cylinder lock unit approved for use with “9-1-1” boxes and attainable only from certain gate companies or contractors. Only authorized emergency service personnel retain keys to these padlocks.

##### 2.2 Falcon Padlock.

An approved “9-1-1” padlock applied to “9-1-1” boxes and attainable only from certain gate companies or contractors. Only authorized emergency service personnel retain keys to these padlocks.

##### 2.2 Key Box / “9-1-1” Key Box.

An approved metal box that contains emergency access keys, or other information for the means and methods to unlock an access door and may in addition, contain such information as required by the fire department to provide safe and ready access to a property, building or structure in event of an emergency.

#### SECTION 3 --- GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

##### 3.1 Where required.

When access to or within a structure or an area is unduly difficult because of secured openings or where immediately access is necessary for life-saving or fire fighting purposes, the Fire Marshal is authorized to require an approved key box or “9-1-1” key box to be installed in an accessible location. The key box shall be of a type approved by the Fire Marshal and shall contain all necessary keys to gain access. In addition to keys, boxes shall contain other items determined to be necessary by the Fire Marshal for the effective response of fire department personnel to an emergency at the premises.

### **3.1.1 Access control gates and barriers.**

For Key Box / “9-1-1” Box use on access control gates and barriers, refer to LSB Standard 04, “Access Control Gates”.

### **3.1.2 High-rise Buildings.**

For Key Box use within high-rise buildings, refer to LSB Standard 06, “Fire Depository Boxes”.

## **3.2 Box Construction.**

Key boxes shall be constructed of metal materials as to be weather resistive and of sufficient strength and thickness to deter forced entry. The box should be of size sufficient to contain all keys, swipe cards, and other required items as may be deemed necessary by the Fire Marshal (for minimum box dimensions see Appendix A). The lid for the box shall be hinged and be designed so as can be secured by an approved mortise cylinder lock or designed with a pad-eye so as can be secured by an approved padlock.

Boxes shall be painted a bright “RED” color so as to be readily noticeable, and have the words “**FIRE DEPARTMENT**”, or the numbers “**9-1-1**”, painted in at least 1-inch “WHITE” letters or numbers on the lid of the box. (See Appendix A)

## **3.3 Location.**

Key boxes shall be installed on the exterior of a structure or building, as near as practical to the main entrance door or designated emergency access door. Boxes should be located within 48 to 60 inches above the ground level and securely affixed to a wall, post or column so as not to be loose or movable. Boxes shall be positioned so as to be readily apparent upon approach to the door.

At locations where hazardous materials are stored in quantities requiring fire department permits and at warehouse locations, Key boxes shall be located at the main fire department access entrance to the facility, either at a guard shack or gate house, or similar location. Where no guard station or gate house is provided, then a weather resistant “9-1-1” box, large enough to contain all required Hazardous Materials Inventory Sheets, floor plans and access keys, shall be provided at a readily identifiable and accessible location that will not be endangered by fire in the facility.

## **3.4 Locking Device.**

Key boxes may be locked with a Falcon Mortise Cylinder Lock, Falcon Padlocks, or a padlock of a design so as can be cut open with standard bolt cutters carried on emergency apparatus. No “shankless”, short shank, nor super harden locks will be allowed.

## **3.5 Approval.**

Fire Department approval is required to install and maintain key boxes for access to or within such structures or properties as office buildings, residential buildings, nursing homes, hospitals, school buildings, industrial plants and facilities, hazardous materials storage buildings, large storage buildings, or other structures as the Fire Marshal may require. Approval shall be obtained through the permitting process prior to final installation of a key box or “9-1-1” key box.

# **SECTION 4 --- PERMITS**

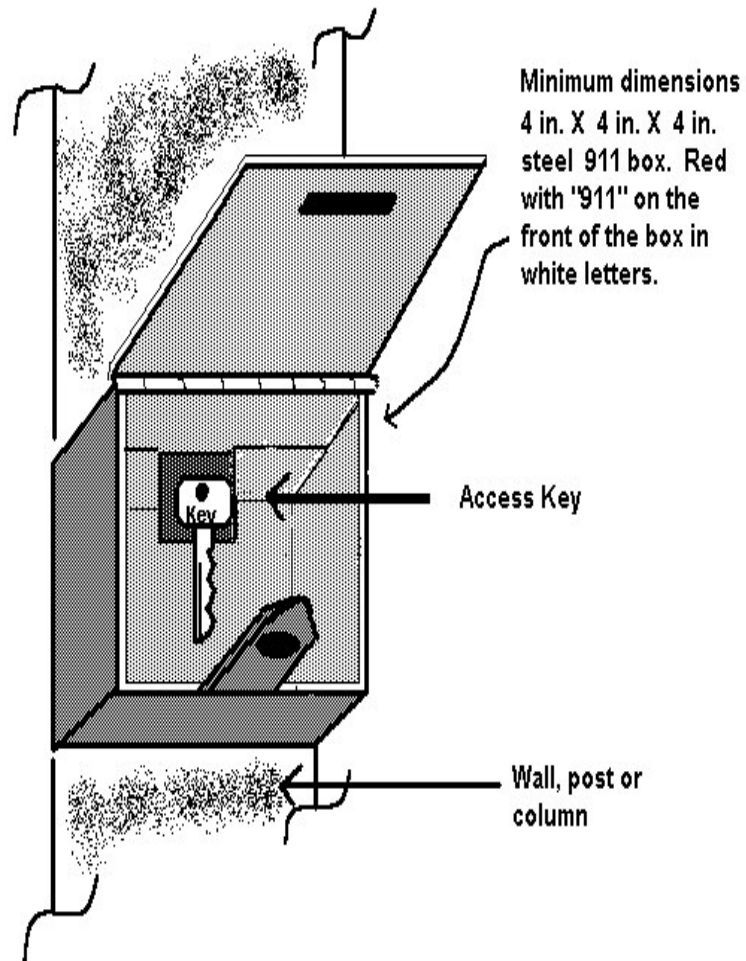
## **4.1 Permit required.**

A fire department permit is required to install and maintain a Key Box or “9-1-1” Key Box. This permit shall be renewed annually. A “Fire Prevention Permit Application” may be made at the Houston Fire Department Permit Office, 1205 Dart Street (off of Houston Avenue); Telephone: 713-247-8557.

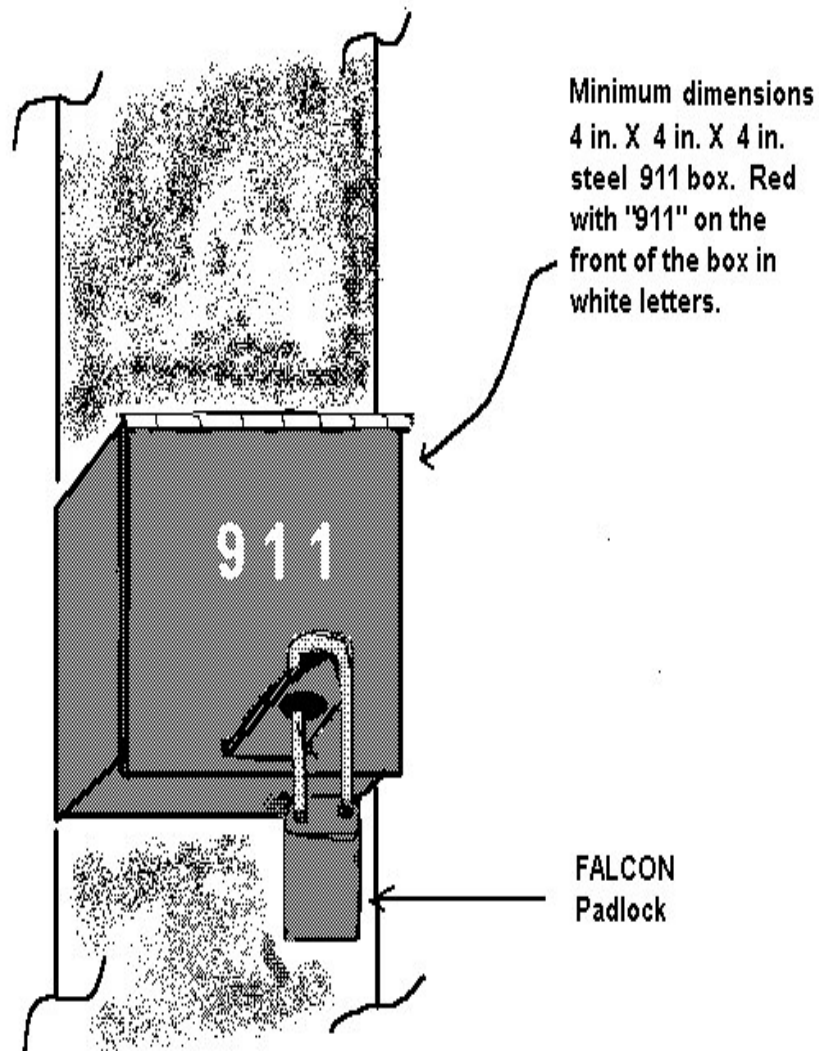
## APPENDIX A

### KEY BOXES

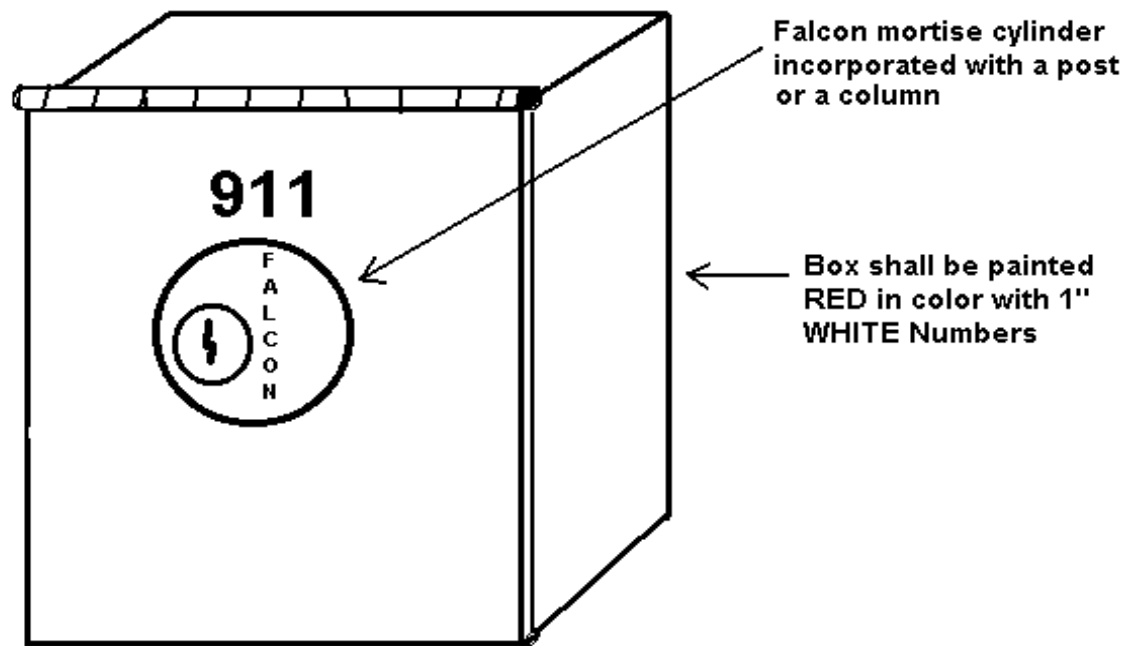
**Figure No. 1 -Typical Key Box / “9-1-1” Box (Open, with padlock removed)**



**Figure No. 2 - Typical Key Box / “9-1-1” (Box closed with padlock)**



**Figure No. 3 – Key Box / “9-1-1” Box with *FALCON* Mortise Cylinder**



## REFERENCES

1. City of Houston *Fire Code*, International Fire Code, 2000 edition, as amended.
2. Life Safety Bureau (LSB) Standard 03, “Fire Department Access”.
3. Life Safety Bureau (LSB) Standard 04, “Access Control Gates”.
4. Life Safety Bureau (LSB) Standard 06, “Fire Depository Boxes”.

Conversion factors: 1 inch = 25mm; 1 foot = 305mm